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HEADLINE: TEAM TAKES DIRECT SWIPE AT CABLEVISION

BYLINE: BY MICHAEL SAUL DAILY NEWS CITY HALL BUREAU

BODY:

JETS VERSUS Cablevision is getting nastier and nastier.

The Jets have joined forces with DirecTV, the nation's fastest-growing satellite-TV service provider, in a phone campaign to get New Yorkers to drop Cablevision, the Daily News has learned.

The Jets teamed up with DirecTV in response to Cablevision's fierce opposition to the proposed \$1.4 billion football stadium on Manhattan's far West Side.

During the past year, Cablevision has tried to scuttle the controversial stadium plan through an aggressive ad and lobbying campaign.

Since Tuesday, a telemarketing company, paid jointly by the Jets and DirecTV, has phoned thousands of people in Brooklyn and the Bronx, where Cablevision has franchises. The calls begin with information about the stadium proposal and quickly move into a strong rebuke of Cablevision.

"They're waging a costly misinformation campaign to try to halt a project which will spur much-needed economic growth for our city," the telemarketer says, according to a partial script obtained by The News.

"You know, you don't have to support a monopoly that doesn't support New York City. You have another television choice besides Cablevision. That choice is DirecTV."

Anyone interested in dropping Cablevision is immediately connected to DirecTV's call center. Industry experts estimate the cost to Cablevision of each lost subscriber is \$4,000.

"It's been successful thus far and would likely be expanded," said a source who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

If expanded, the next target of the campaign is expected to be Long Island, where Cablevision has a virtual monopoly. The Jets also are considering offering a \$50 gift certificate for team paraphernalia as a further incentive to switch.

Cablevision spokesman Jim Maiella said the cable company offers a slew of features that satellite providers, such as DirecTV, can't provide, including video on demand, more high-definition shows and interactive game packages.

"We believe our customers appreciate the quality and value of our services and won't be swayed by an opportunistic marketing ploy," Maiella said.

DirecTV spokesman Bob Marsocci said the Jets approached DirecTV about the phone campaign. "It's a Jets initiative,"

Matthew Higgins, the Jets' vice president of strategic planning, declined to comment on the specifics of the campaign. "This is what New York is all about: variety - in sporting venues, restaurants, museums and, yes, television," he said.

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